

MORALITY AND POLITICS WITH REFERENCE TO MACHIAVELLI'S THE PRINCE

Mohammed Seid Ali, MA

Bahir Dar University/Ethiopia

Abstract

Niccolo Machiavelli (1469 -1527) was an Italian statesman and political writer. He was employed on diplomatic missions as a defense secretary for his nation. When he retired from his public life, he wrote one of his famous books, *The Prince* in 1513, which describes the mechanisms through which political power is gained and maintained. The prince is the most revolutionary work that opens a new chapter as far as the realm of modern political philosophy is concerned. Unlike the conventional understanding about political power during the ancient as well as medieval periods, Machiavelli's political analysis does not associate the end of the state power to some extra- political (moral, religious and cultural) standards so that it has been defined as an end in itself. Accordingly, he confines his inquiries in to the means that are best suited to acquire, retain and expand political power. At the final analysis, he separates the discourse on political power as well as the means to acquire and sustain it from basic religious and conventional moral maxims. There is a white fact that the purpose of moral philosophy is to avoid evil and appreciate good acts through creating awareness in the minds of the society on what ought to /ought not to be done. In the prince, however, Machiavelli clearly reflects on how those evil acts from the standpoints of conventional morality and religion may not similarly be interpreted in the practical political or public lives of those who are in power. For him, the quest for political power is responded in effective and efficient manner when the prince knows the difference between private and public life and acts in accordance with 'the reason of the state'. To sum up, the question of political power and the strategies to sustain it are the central issues which are to be correctly understood by any political personality. The question, how can a prince /a ruler acquire and sustain his political life with reference to his public and private morality, has been the theme of the paper. And, its departure has been developing a critical review of the writing of Machiavelli's *The Prince* ,which reflects on the fundamental quest for those viable options of political power which may usually be indifferent to religious and moral guidelines. Accordingly, I have

shown as to how much those good acts from the perspective of private religious and moral standards may not usually be working in the political lives of those who are in power. To this effect, different domestic and international experiences have been critically illustrated to substantiate the predominately Machiavellian nature of political leadership in the domestic as well as international arena. However, I have also tried to critically review and rebut Machiavelli's ambitious quest for a pure, objective, descriptive and realistic analysis of political power which is free from relative socio-cultural values and normative judgments.

Keywords: Morality, Politics, Power

Introduction

Machiavelli wrote *The Prince* as a guide book for his own prince, Lorenzo De Medici, to promote himself into the political arena of Italy. He analyzed power and the way Italy could gain enough to become a strong, independent, and viable state (Machiavelli, 2014). As it has been understood from the above reading, Machiavelli's *The prince* is a little handbook, however, packed with amazing political advices to those who are already within political leadership tasks as well as those who are aspiring for it on how to acquire and sustain their power. It is one of the most impressive texts that excites some and harasses others through those revolutionary advices to those political personalities who wish and maintain their power. His basic reflections lie on how wrong or immoral acts with reference to private moral and religious standards may be valuable in public /political life. However, Machiavelli did not believe in pursuing evil for evil's sake, rather when the only way to keep power is to act evilly, those who own the state power must act accordingly. In other words, according to his writing, good and evil are equal in the contest for power (Ibid). At any rate, based on the above general understanding of political power, Machiavelli has provided with some of the following political guidelines which are incorporated in his text, *The Prince*:

With Regard to Duties of the Prince in Relation to his Military Strength,

Machiavelli advises the prince to be always thinking of war: his military organization, preparation and discipline. The statesman, according to Machiavelli, should have a well armed, disciplined and standby force to defend his state's power and security from any threat. Besides, he should also be accompanied by qualified skills and knowledge of war and history through training and action according to his analysis (Gauss, 1952). Moreover, as to the question whether a citizen army is to be preferred to a mercenary one, he insists that the liberty of a state is contingent upon the military preparedness of its own forces (Machiavelli, 1965). In the discipline

of international relations, there are two dominant but contending theoretical perspectives to deal with the situations of the international politics. First of all, political realism is the view that stresses the competitive nature of the international politics among sovereign states. On the contrary, political idealism tends to emphasize on cooperation, diplomacy, and international norms as guarantees of national interests of individual states as well as international peace and security (Karpowicz,2013). In this regard, Machiavelli propounds political Realism which considers the principal actors in the international arena as states, which are concerned with their own security, act in pursuit of their own national interests, and struggle for power.

In light of his preceding reflections, Machiavelli advises those who are within political leaderships to constantly ready for war, even in peaceful time, with commendable military skills, knowledge and discipline to defend their political status quo and their respective states from any potential threat (internal as well as external). Here the logical implication of his argument is that internal economic, political, security and military strengths and readiness, rather than external or international diplomatic, legal and institutional appeals, are practical guarantees for a state's national interest, as well as international peace and security.

Here, one can prove the practical validity of Machiavelli's quest for political realism, the necessity of strong, independent and viable state power, by citing different historical experiences at the domestic and international levels. Domestically, the historical experiences of Ethiopia, up until recently, could be taken as reliable evidence. For that matter, the absence of popular, strong and viable central government with strong domestic economic, political and military power has put the security as well as national interest of Ethiopia at risk (See Ethiopian Foreign Policy ,2003). Accordingly, the country had been well known for its civil war, inter and intra-ethnic conflicts or instability to the extent it had been on the verge of disintegration at the end of the cold war period. Besides, it had also been facing series of failures of its diplomatic appeals to those concerned international institutions and actors while it had been facing enduring legacy of foreign aggressions during the colonial (the retaliatory aggression of Italy) and post-colonial aggressions of Somalia and Eritrea). Thus, according to his analysis, a state should never keep its existence in the absence of a powerful and central management since a power-lacking state would be the target of both internal and external enemies.

Beyond the above domestic experiences witnessing the validity of Machiavelli's claim for 'might makes right', it is not also difficult for any reasonable person to examine the experiences of the two major destructions of world wars attributed to the failure of diplomacy and international institutions which had been ultimately pacified through military might of

those super powers. More recently, one can also validate the failure of the existing peaceful international instruments and institutions which have been claimed to stand for the territorial sovereignty and integrity of states while Ukraine's Crimea has been unlawfully annexed by the powerful Russian Federation.

To sum up, Machiavelli's *The Prince* propounds for the existence of stable and strong domestic government with strong military and security apparatus capable of realizing the 'reason of the state'. Besides, the practical experiences in the international system have also witnessed that the ultimate solution of previous international peace and security threats has been military might. However, it needs some caution in the sense that Machiavelli is not totally devaluating diplomacy, international laws and institutions as remedies to the sovereignty of states, international peace and security; rather he has been realistic about how much those amicable international options are soft with weak enforcement mechanisms.

At any rate, the above analysis of power developed by Machiavelli is, however extremely radical and with questionable ontological and epistemological foundations. First of all, it is difficult to describe objectively the question of power as if it were value free from any normative judgment. In addition, his radical and descriptive emphasis on national interest of states is often emanated from his absolute skepticism regarding the relevance of moral values or mutual interest to govern relations among states. Accordingly, his justification for power to preserve national interest of states has been his shortsighted analysis of power which is contrary to the predominantly interdependent and normative establishment of the international system. Thus descriptively defining and detaching the questions of power and national interest from their normative establishments will lead us ill conceived ontological and epistemological conclusion about the topic under discussion. This approach, therefore, will in turn result in irrational and egocentric understanding of politics, which will ultimately result in mutual destructions among individual citizens as well as states.

Of the Things for which Princes are Praised or Blamed, Machiavelli concentrates on explaining why some princes are judged positively and others are condemned. In this regard, he wants to know how a ruler can make himself well spoken of and avoid being the subject of unnecessary abuse and vilification. Moreover, the ruler is not expected to be good and morally sensitive since those who are under his leadership are inherently bad according to him (George, 2002). According to different philosophical literatures of prominent ancient western thinkers of classical political realism, defining human nature is their starting point. Accordingly, realists view human beings as inherently egoistic and self-interested. At the debate in

Sparta, described in Book I of Thucydides' *History*, the Athenians affirm the priority of self-interest over morality. For them, considerations of right and wrong have never turned people aside from the opportunities of aggrandizement offered by superior strength (Thucydides,1993). Besides, Thrasymachus, in Plato's *Republic*, has also reflected a negative perception towards those who are governed while he attributes justice as the interest of the stronger (Plato's Republic,2014). After that Machiavelli has also developed a deep, radical and suspicious characterization of those who are governed as it has been stated below. Finally, Thomas Hobbes has developed the idea for the inherently evil and anti social nature of human beings to justify strong and unlimited government (Hobbs:1994).

As political realists, all the above figures have commonly known for their negative characterization of human nature in general and those who are governed in particular. For that matter, Machiavelli has developed the claim in the sense that since others (the governed) are not good, the prince cannot be benefited of being different i.e. he reflects a pessimist attitude towards those governed. This implies that good character on the side of the prince may not be the source of a good reputation for him. Therefore, according to his advice, if the prince values reputation he must learn how not to be good so that he will maintain his power by seeming than being a good person.

As it has also been underlined before, according to Machiavelli, if it is found to be necessary, political leadership requires the knowledge as well as the art to manipulate the public employing rhetoric regardless of the factual validity of the speech. In this regard, one can witness how much Mussolini of Italy, Hitler of Germany, Mengistu of Ethiopia, and Stalin of the Soviet Union, have been effective leaders with in their respective nations in winning the attention of their people using propaganda as an instrument to consolidate their political power.

Taking all the above reflections towards the personality of those who are in power, however Machiavelli is not always preaching the rulers for the strategy of propaganda and pessimist mentality towards the public. For him, these strategies are recommended only when they could contribute for the consolidation of political power. Thus he is not discrediting honesty, truth, moral optimism for good; rather such characters may contradict with other possible bad options on the table, according to the circumstance of the case, of the ruler to maintain his political power.

On Liberality and Stinginess, for Machiavelli, it could be a classic mistake of a ruler simply to pursue the best possible reputation. For example, it sounds illogical for a ruler to seek reputation for being generous since it is dangerous to cultivate such an image in the minds of the governed. In other words, if a ruler aims to be brought generous, then he simply raises

everyone's expectation and traps himself on a spiral of rising hopes and demands. In fact, a wise ruler will be contempt to have a reputation for being mean, though it is a vice to be so, and it helps him stay in charge (George,2002).

According to Machiavelli, human nature is fickle that people cannot be relied on. Accordingly, the role of the ruler should not be to satisfy all changing desires of his community but to create a strong, safe and united country. For him, the desires of citizens are the outcomes of their fickle nature and thus, could not be predicted. This implies that the prince is not expected to be excessively generous while such an act will fuel the unlimited and selfish expectations of the governed according to his analysis.

Machiavelli describes that being a mean is a vice in our private moral stand point, but it may be a viable option in political life. This is basically because of the fact that the ultimate answer and object of political and moral questions are different. In this regard, what is morally virtuous might not be working from political perspective so that there is a clear boundary between moral and political questions. If the prince asks the moral question, meanness is vice, however if he asks the political question, does it enable the prince to hang on, and then the answer is it is a necessary skill and policy since both answers are true in their different contexts. Here one can witness Machiavelli's amoral and revolutionary approach about the ultimate objective and mechanisms of the state power. For him, the power of the state is an end in itself that cannot be mixed with other moral and spiritual ends. To this effect, those who are in power may employ immoral and spiritually evil acts considering the existing circumstance.

Previously the power of the state had been understood to achieve justice, good life, happiness, and any other morally as well as spiritually justifiable ends to the public. For that matter, the state power had been defined as an instrument of justice according to Plato so that the mechanisms to achieve and maintain political leadership are up to virtuous qualities of the ruler (Plato's Republic,2014) Besides, good life is the basic purpose of the power of the monarch according to Aristotle so that the moral virtues of the political leadership are not questionable (Aristotle,2014). Finally, St.Thomas Aquinas of the medieval period attributes the mission of earthly political leaderships to realize earthly peace and justice for the ultimate heavenly peace and justice. These philosophers therefore have tried to justify the need for the state power with solid moral foundation and motives. However their analyses are only with mere paper value which does not represent the real nature of politics according to Machiavelli and his proponents. For Machiavelli, politics is not a clean game which is based on fair-play. There are many corruptions, wars, sufferings related to politics and this is the reality.

When we analyze the works of Machiavelli, particularly of *The prince*, we should consider the historical period as well as context in which Europe had gone through. And it is known that the Middle-Age was the darkest period of European history because of the pressure of the Roman Catholic Church (Machiavelli,1994).Although he lived in the 15th century at the start of Renaissance, he thinks and writes in a very secular way and does not deal too much with religion. Besides, he wants limit the power of the Church through reflecting empirical analysis which divorce the power of the state from the domination of religion. Thus, Machiavelli's understanding on the end of political power has been dissociated from justice, good life, and heavenly peace or justice, rather political power is an end in itself. Accordingly, political power as an end in itself, disassociating itself from any moral as well as religious establishments, justifies all possible means according to his analysis in *The prince*.

On Cruelty and Clemency, whether it is better for the ruler to be loved or feared, according to Machiavelli, the ruler should always ask the question whether such a policy help him to fulfill his objective of sustaining his power. According to him, it does not matter for the ruler to be considered as cruel by his subjects. As long as the effect is to retain the state power and prevent trouble; such kind of consideration does not have any impact in itself. Thus no ruler should mind being called cruel for what he does to keep his subjects united and to keep control of the state. A wise ruler chooses to be feared rather than loved since the need to be loved makes the ruler dependent on others as opposed to the fundamental rule, to achieve independence from the favor and resources of anyone else (George,2002).

However, Machiavelli cautions political leaderships as to how and when they are cruel as:

I believe that here it is a question of cruelty used well or badly. We can say that cruelty is used well (if it is permissible to talk in this way of what is evil) when it is employed once for all, and one's safety depends on it, and then it is not persisted in but as far as possible turned to the good of one's subjects. Cruelty badly used is that which, although infrequent to start with, as time goes on, rather than disappearing, grows in intensity. Those who use the first method can, with divine and human assistance, find some means of consolidating their position; the others cannot possibly stay in power (George,1988:99).

Here we can see that Machiavelli recognizes that such actions may morally unacceptable, i.e. evil, but he still recommends them as tools to consolidate the safety and power of the prince. Furthermore, he assumes that

in the end such means are turned to 'good' ends defined as the welfare of the prince's subjects, but notice this is only as far as possible, i.e. after the survival of the prince has been assured. Machiavelli elevates this to a principle of necessity, based on making the best of situations to ensure the continued, and hopefully increasing, power of the prince and his state.

The prince, therefore, must rely on what he can control as:

So, on this question of being loved or feared, I conclude that since some men love as they please, but fear when the prince pleases, a wise prince should rely on what he controls, not on what he cannot control. He must only endeavor, as I have said, to escape being hated (Machiavelli,1988:99).

From the above argument, one can see Machiavelli's emphasis on achieving long-term goals, even if cruel means are required. Likewise, we see an emphasis on the welfare of the whole community, but specifically in terms of law and order. Indeed, Machiavelli has something of a utilitarian doctrine, which treats pains and pleasures in a kind of control calculus, e.g. kill few to keep many. In short, according to Machiavelli, to pursue love is to lose power so that it is better for a prince, unlike a private or ordinary person, to be feared and an active risk taker than to be loved for his political success. Besides, Machiavelli also used and understood the word reputation not from the perspective of moral virtue (acting in a way people expect or being a good man in the eyes of the people). For him, to have a good reputation for a prince is to pretend rather than being a good man and to be a smart calculator in his public activities to maintain his power. Here it reminds me of the Emperor Halesilassie & Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia as to how much these political leaderships are black Machiavellians in putting the above guidelines of power to effectively maintain their political leaderships around forty and twenty years respectively.

The way a Ruler should keep his word, Machiavelli advises him that there are methods of fighting, the one by law, the other by force: the first method of that of men, the second of beasts. For him, the first method is often insufficient so that a ruler must have recourse to the second method. It is therefore necessary for a ruler to know well on how to act both as a beast and a man. Thus he obliged to know well how to act as a beast must imitate the fox and the lion, for the lion cannot protect himself from traps, and the fox cannot defend himself from wolves. A ruler must therefore be a fox to recognize traps and a lion to frighten wolves according to his analysis (Ferguson,2004).

In particular, a ruler should feel no obligation to honor his word, or obligations placed on him by the aristocracy or the people. In Book XVIII this is part of a broader pessimism concerning contemporary human nature:

So it follows that a prudent ruler cannot, and must not, honor his word when it places him at a disadvantage and when the reasons for which he made his promise no longer exist. If all men were good, this precept would not be good; but because men are wretched creatures who would not keep their word to you, you need not keep your word to them... Men are so simple, and so much creatures of circumstance, that the deceiver will always find someone ready to be deceived (Machiavelli:99).

In this section, one possible implication of Machiavelli's advice is that a prudent ruler ought not to keep his promise when by so doing it would be against his interest (his power). Since men (the people governed) are bad and would not observe their faith with the prince, he is not obliged or expected to keep faith with them. And the prince should, if possible, pretend a good man: full of mercy, kindness, loyalty and honesty, however he may at any necessary moment need to cast free of those virtuous limitations. Machiavelli's reflection in this regard is therefore to recommend a prince/a ruler to be flexible and pretend rather than being a good and religious man. In this regard, Emperor Haillisse of Ethiopia had been well-known to pretend a humble and religious person with full of mercy, kindness, and honesty with the motive of strengthening his traditional legitimacy and central authority (Shepherd:1975). In reality, however the emperor did not dare to disclose his nation's humanitarian crisis caused by draught and famine to the international community while he was addressing his anniversary with extravagant celebration ceremony.

On Avoiding Contempt and Hatred, a ruler should not employ useless cruelty according to Machiavelli. Accordingly, a ruler should not be arbitrarily cruel who cuts off people's head if they happen to displease him. Machiavelli admitted that if a choice must be made, it is better for a ruler to be feared than loved. Here, he drew a distinction between being feared than hated, and pointed out that he ought to acquire the favor of his people if for no other reason than to avoid conspiracies against his power (Machiavelli, 1994).

As it has been stated above, Machiavelli's choice for the ruler to be feared than loved is attributed to choose the better of the two alternatives which enables him to be self reliant or independent from his subjects. In this regard, the ruler shall be sufficiently strong by himself in all forms so that he will be less dependent from others. On the other hand, if he prefers to be loved, he needs to expect it from others or his subject so that he will be more dependent and vulnerable.

Machiavelli's reflection in the previous paragraphs also lies on the fact that the ruler shall draw a clear boundary between his public and private

morality. Thus, in his public or political life, he is not expected to appeal to his subjects for love and respect; rather he shall establish strong state apparatus which triggers obedience among the minds of the ruled. While conducting his public duties, according to Machiavelli, the ruler however is not advised to be arbitrarily cruel to his subjects since it will cost him unnecessary hatred in the minds of his subjects. Besides, in his private life, he is recommended to be a good husband and father who respect the women and the property of his citizens. Thus, he should refrain himself from interfering in the private affairs of his citizens as they will hate him for meddling on their personal affairs.

With Regard to the Usefulness of Fortress, Machiavelli underlines that disarmament of citizens destabilizes the new state. Accordingly, he develops the pragmatic guideline that the ruler should not weaken parts of his subjects since, according to him; disarmament is a threat to security of the state power. For him, if the ruler pursues disarmament he merely annoys his subjects and without succeeding to achieve his goal. Accordingly, it is better for him to leave them armed and to work more to win their support. Besides, Machiavelli's policy guideline stands against the strategy of divide and rule policy since it damages national unity and by then the central political authority (Machiavelli,1994). This implies that such a policy may create conducive ground for conflicts among different sections of the community which may even lead the nation in to bloody civil war or a complete anarchy. Thus, the ruler cannot strengthen his power by dividing and disarming his subjects since a disarmed and divided state is always less stable so that such a strategy is self defeating. Therefore, for him, the best source of secured and viable state has united and armed citizens not fragmented and disarmed ones. Besides, a united society that has respect and loyalty towards their ruler will always act together bravely against any danger supporting their leader. This should be based on the belief and trust of citizens to their leader according to Machiavelli.

The logical implication of Machiavelli's preceding analysis, which I strongly agree, shows that leaving citizens armed in the absence of broad and strong national consensus or unity among themselves and the absence of mutual trust between the ruled and the ruler is not recommended. If this situation is allowed to be happening, it will result in an eminent danger to the power of the state which may ultimately lead to the total collapse of the state. In this regard, the recent experiences of Somalia, Libya, Iraq, Syria, South Sudan, Central African Republic, Ukraine and Mali have been clearly witnessing how dangerous divided and armed citizens are for the viability of the state power or for its very existence.

Therefore, in the absence strong state machinery and broad national consensus, the immoral, inhuman, brutal and savage nature of human being may lead to mutual destruction among armed citizens according to Machiavelli. In this regard, Hobbes shares similar position that he propounds pessimist attitudes towards the nature of human beings in general and that of the ruled in particular. Besides, he supports the existence of strong state institutions and central political authority to reinstate security and viability of the state power (Hobbes,1994).

On Alignment and Neutrality, for Machiavelli, if two neighboring states go to war the best policy for the other state is to side whichever appears the stronger. If it stays neutral whosoever the victor will treat it as if it were an enemy (Ebenstein,1982). In this regard, the policy guideline of Machiavelli advocates commitment rather than neutrality. The best example of our time in employing Machiavelli's advice is Turkey's alignment with USA's aggression against Iraqi. Accordingly, the virtuous quest for being a responsible actor in international conflicts by reconciling confronting parties may not work in Machiavelli's political calculation.

At this point, I partially disagree with the reflection of Machiavelli. Though there have been many instances in which neutrality in international conflicts is not at the best interest of a given state as Machiavelli stipulates, the position of alignment should may also be followed by international responsibility. Therefore, I argue that his call for alignment of neighboring states with the mighty state in time of interstate conflicts against the weaker state may be considered as serious breach of international obligation or trust resulting international responsibility and condemnation.

As to the Personality of the Prince's Councilor, Machiavelli's policy guideline propounds not to hire an advisor who is more ruthless than the ruler since he is defeated by conventional moral and religious virtues. And the prince must not be open to every body's opinion (Ebenstein,1982). For him, political authorities and advises must not be given the chance to expect authority since their approach may clash with the ruler's interest (power) and any advice should be sought actively and not awaited passively.

The Controversy between Moral Norms and Politics in Machiavelli's the Prince

Moral norms are established as prescriptions that ought to be followed by individuals in order to do well and avoid evil in their private as well as public lives. However, Machiavelli has denied such foundations of moral norms in understanding and interpreting public or political life of those who are in power. His a morally neutral approach is seen to follow

from his consistent way of explaining the autonomy of political life from moral and religious principles. Thus, he establishes a completely different and secular political philosophy of state power, which makes the statesman, violates some religious and moral norms if the end necessitates such acts. Before Machiavelli's text (*The Prince*), the argument of the Athenian envoys presented in Thucydides' *Melian Dialogue* (Thucydides,1993), and that of Thrasymachus in Plato's *Republic*(2014), all of these challenged the ancient and Christian views of the unity of politics and ethics. However, such amoral understanding of political power had never been prevailed in the mainstream western political thought till Machiavelli's little hand book, *The Prince*.

While justifying the boundary between morality or religion and that of politics:

Machiavelli develops the idea of the reason of the state under which many acts are permissible and even obligatory to the statesman that would be considered as serious crimes if judged in the eyes of religion and morality. It is then legitimate for a statesman to do things that would be considered bad when done by an individual in his private life. Here Machiavelli did not say that morality and religion are inferior to political power, rather he clearly disclosed the reality that the canons of power and the tenets of morality or religion are independent of each other as a general guideline (Ebenstein,1982:284).

For Machiavelli, the moralist will recognize the supremacy of his moral code over any other systems where as the religious man will not admit a revival to his religious code. Based on what he historically experiences, however Machiavelli advises the rulers on how they should effectively act in their political life beyond their private morality. This implies that the statesmen will be guided solely by his code, the acquiring, retention and expansion of his political power so that the reason of the state may not allow him to act as he wishes. Machiavelli, as a pragmatist and political realist, therefore, recognizes the objective nature of political life which cannot be manipulated by any normative analysis.

Moreover, Machiavelli's understanding of the 'reason of the state' has been reflected in his respective texts; *The Discourse* and *The Prince* as:

The reason of the state, which implies the very safety of a country, depends up on the resolution to be taken by its ruler. Here no consideration of justice or injustice, humanity or cruelty nor of glory or of shame should be allowed to prevail. But, putting all other considerations aside the only question should be what course will save the life and liberty of the country (Ibid).

As it has been clearly presented above, the reason of the state, which is the security of the state, takes precedence over all other considerations according to Machiavelli's political analysis. In effect, he seems to be concerned both with the means and ends of political power. Thus, he advocates strategies not to preserve power for its own sake but to create and maintain a strong state for the good of the whole community (Meinecke, 1957). In his regard, Machiavelli is not claimed to leave moral values aside, and rather he has claimed to propound teleological and utilitarian moral doctrines as it has also been reflected before. This is because he is claimed to be concerned not only with the political power of the ruler but also for the security of the community at large.

However I argue against the above claim since what one can understand from the overall spirit of his text (*The prince*) is the quest for power for its own sake leaving the above utilitarian objective as secondary. Accordingly, the good of the community and the security of the state are not claimed to be Machiavelli's prime motives, rather they could be taken as strategies to sustain and preserve the power of the ruler or the state. Therefore, I argue that he cannot be taken as a utilitarian writer.

Machiavelli, through which I partially agree with, does not invent conspiracy, torture and murder rather these acts are historical realities which are witnessing the true color of political life, particularly in the international context. In this regard, acts of conspiracy, torture, political assassinations, and proxy wars initiated by different intelligence as well as security apparatus of super powers for global dominance have been common scenarios witnessing the amoral nature of political life. Though there are severe reactions against such acts from individual moral standpoints, they may be viable instruments for global dominance states in the discourse of political realism. Therefore what is evil from the viewpoint of morality and religion may be good from the viewpoint of the reason of the state since it may serve its purpose; to acquire, retain or expand power.

As it has been underlined before, according to Machiavelli's *the Prince*, it is based on the basic objective of the political system (i.e. power) that a particular action is good or bad in the sense that there exist no absolute or definite categories of actions as good and evil in political life. If the basic objective of conduct is friendship and justice or God the individual action will be judged good or evil to the extent that it agrees with or deviates from such goals (Viroli, 1992). Here, the interest at stake is individual or private moral and religious principles. But for the ruler the interest at stake is power and the decision as to whether a particular action is good or bad will depend on the extent through which it furthers the gain and retention of power. In this case violent measures such as shooting may be called good if such acts are alternatives to eliminate political opponents according to Machiavelli. In

this regard, it reminds me of the exploitation of Machiavelli's political advice by Ethiopian political elites during the post 2005 political election. During that period Ethiopia was in a serious political crisis and disorder, which was caused by disagreements on the result of the parliamentary election between the ruling and opposition parties. During that very critical moment the ruling party was successful in implementing Machiavelli's political tactic, taking violent measures so that the party was effective in maintaining its political power.

According to Machiavelli's *the prince*, goodness also coincides with efficiency. Efficient means of acquiring, consolidating and expanding power is good where as an inefficient means is bad. Accordingly, efficiency in politics is analogous to virtue in morality and religion (Ebenstein,1982). In addition, virtue for Machiavelli means military valor. For him, the quality of military valor is required in actual warfare as well as in extreme political crisis situations for in such conditions the boundary between conflicts and peace, between chaos and stability is largely blurred (Carl von 1984). Thus, in crisis situations, the concept of virtue implies the ability to understand the existing situation and to respond to it in a flexible and non-dogmatic manner. Machiavelli has therefore used the term efficiency to designate calculated and cost minimizing acts of rulers in time of crisis.

As it has been reflected in many areas of his thought, Machiavelli is more interested in means rather than ends. In politics, the end; the acquiring, consolidating, and expanding of power is presumed to be naturally inherent in a ruler or would be rulers. And, what attracts Machiavelli's attention is the problem of technical skill of rulings, the ability of the ruler to fight his way into political power by any means. As a result, when he applies the term 'virtue' to the successful ruler, he means an ambitious, ruthless, and mindful of other men's wives. In this regard, Machiavelli, time and time again, admires Alexander VI as a role model in his political success. According to Machiavelli, Alexander VI was having the above qualities so that he was successful (Machiavelli,1977). Machiavelli's views on religion and morality illustrate his belief in the supremacy of political power over religious principles in political decisions. For him, religion can be seen as the 'poor man's reason' and morality (ibid). According to his analysis, if the ruler fears God adhering to His commandments, his political life is going to be short since those religious commandments may contradict with the governing rules as well as practices of political life.

According to Machiavelli's *the Prince*, religion is a mere instrument of political domination and unity. Accordingly, the ruler may support and spread religious doctrines and beliefs in miracles as far as they keep the people well conducted and united. Beyond this, according to Machiavelli, religious institutions and norms do not have any practical role to play for the

success of the ruler in his political life. In this regard, Emperor Hailesillasse of Ethiopia had been named as black Machiavellian in exploiting Ethiopian Orthodox Church as an instrument of national unity and justification for his absolute monarchy.

For Machiavelli, it makes no difference whether the prince spreads among the people true or false religious beliefs and ideas. To support his position, Machiavelli made the Catholic Church of Italy be responsible for the disintegration of his country. This is to say that, Machiavelli had serious accusation on the church that she kept his country divided and she was the sole cause for Italian political disunity. For him, the church did never have sufficient power and courage which enable to make her the sole sovereign of all Italy. Thus, a similar range of opinions exists in connection with Machiavelli's attitude toward religion in general, and Christianity in particular. The *Discourses* makes clear that conventional Christianity took from human beings the vigor required for active civil life (Machiavelli,1965).

Machiavelli has a pessimist of convection on moral consideration so that, according to him, the statesman cannot afford the Luxury of practicing morality in actual terms in his public life. And, it is necessary for the ruler to know well how to use the two methods of fighting, the beast and the man according to the existing reality. And, in the world of actual political life, keeping faith may be irreconcilable with the interest of the ruler. Therefore, a prudent ruler ought not to keep faith when by doing so it would be against his interest. Besides, since men are not good by their nature, the prince cannot get anything by acting the opposite. Thus, Machiavelli takes a radically pessimistic view on human nature that influences his political philosophy reflected in *the Prince* (Machiavelli,1965).Machiavelli's political advice goes to the extreme when he recommends, the ruler to use poisoning, silent dagger, and other forms of execution, if necessary for his political success (Ibid). However, he counsels rulers to be temperate; not to be uselessly cruel, since it is followed by unnecessary hatred from their public. And, according to him, since there is not any policy, which is absolutely safe in practical politics, the choice is often between a larger and lesser evil rather than between an evil and good.

Critics on the Practicality of Machiavelli's Analysis of Power

To what extent Machiavelli's analysis of political power is practically cogent; I can sufficiently argue that the existential political developments, at domestic and international levels, have been predominantly Machiavellian. For that matter, in the international context, America's and other dominant international players' realist or pragmatic foreign policy alternatives towards each other as well as the rest of the world reflect the practicality of

Machiavelli's political logic (maintaining the global leadership). Accordingly, the above actors usually compute to maintain their status quo of being powerful global players instead of being genuine actors for international justice, peace, security and friendship. This implies that the existing international system has been dominated by the view of Machiavelli's Political realism. This implies that the question of international moral and legal responsibility has been dominated by relentless efforts and motives of superpowers to maintain their global political, economic, and military supremacy by eliminating any potential global player.

Domestically also, different statesmen, in democratic as well as dictatorial states, usually employ Machiavellian maxims to maintain and expand their political leadership as it has been previously explained with different examples. Therefore, the majority of Machiavelli's analysis and reflection about political power shows the predominant and realist nature of politics in the domestic as well as international arenas.

Though the majority of arguments developed by Machiavelli sound convincing in disclosing what is actually happening at domestic as well as international politics, I argue that there are still logical gaps that his analysis of power did fall to properly address. Before he attributed both the domestic and international politics, he had began with 'empirical' and 'objective' approaches in defining individual human beings who are governed and that of states as international actors as follows;

In reflecting up on the domestic political leadership of a state, as a radical realist, Machiavelli has developed the claim that since others (the governed) are not good, the ruler cannot be benefited of being different. This implies that ordinary citizens are inherently bad, egoist, selfish and indifferent to basic moral and religious virtues in treating each others as well as to words their political leaderships. Accordingly, based on his analysis, those who are in political leadership could not be benefited from being virtuous so that they should develop amoral qualities to treat their citizens. This in turn implies that political leaders should not put trust up on their citizens and act independently and swiftly to sustain their power.

However, I argue that his analysis in this regard sounds not logical because of the following reasons. First of all, unlike Machiavelli, it is impossible to develop universal and objective descriptions or claims about the nature of human beings (the governed) in general and those who are in power. Here, unlike him, we are dealing with highly subjective human behaviors which is the central jurisdiction of social science so that it is methodologically unsound to establish universal claim as to the exact and inherent nature of human persons or citizens. Thus, other than those physical, chemical, biological, and mathematical questions which could easily be solved by pure experimental procedures as well as mathematical

formulations, topics related to the way how human beings behave are beyond the reach of such pure quantitative analysis. Thus, I argue that Machiavelli's quest for descriptive, objective and universal claim about human nature could not satisfy potential ontological as well as epistemological contentions.

If we accept Machiavelli's ambition to describe human nature with his pessimist characterizations, our logical destination will be to assert that there is no mutual trust between the two evils i.e. citizens and those who are in power. Accordingly, following his analysis, those who are in power are not expected to be morally responsible so that they may act independently or even contrary to basic religious and moral virtues in their public lives (if their power necessitates). Thus responding citizens with cruelty, developing might that triggers fear among citizens, not to be generous and not to keep their promises may be justifiable acts of the rulers in their political lives. However, in a democracy, as John Lock, Jon Jacque Rousseau, and Immanuel Kant clearly stipulated, through which the ultimate power of a state resides up on the total, free and informed will of citizens. In this regard Machiavelli's ambition for an independent and powerful government in the presence of mutual distrust between the ruled and the ruler may not be practical. Thus without the free will of the people to legitimize those who are in power, it may not be realistic to establish a powerful and viable state unlike Machiavelli's analysis.

The international politics, despite its predominantly Machiavellian nature which is governed by the will of powerful states, I argue that Machiavelli's assertions are also extreme and miss the current context in this regard. He characterizes states as if they were the only dominant actors in the international arena where there are hostile international environments defining national interests of sovereign states. Unlike Machiavelli's reflection, the role of States as dominant actors in the international system has been changing for the strength of non-state actors. In this regard, the expansions and influences of giant multinational corporations in the international arena are becoming eminent. For example, Shell Company, Coca Cola Company, Toyota, Nokia, and other transnational companies are running billions of dollars of financial transactions in the global economy so that they may have much stronger influences than individual states in the international relation. Thus, I argue that Machiavelli's description of states as dominant actors in the international system do not cogently witness the current international context.

Moreover, Machiavelli's interpretation of the international politics as an arena dictated by power, 'might makes right', does not reflect the dominant practices of the international system. Unlike his description in this regard, the majority of international relations of states or other actors have been resolved by international norms, institutions and other peaceful or

diplomatic means. Accordingly if the foundation of the international system had been established on the mutual distrust between or among states to maintain their national interests, it could have been resulted in mutual destruction among themselves which is a zero sum international order.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The role of moral norms in political life is secondary as per the political reflection of Machiavelli work, *The Prince*. According to his analysis, there is a clear boundary between private and public morality attributed to their differences on their respective means and ends as it has been reflected in the body of the paper. Based on this line of argument, as a political realist, Machiavelli provides his political advices to those who aspire and maintain political power. For that matter; on liberality and stinginess ,of things for which princes are praised or blamed, on cruelty and clemency ,why a prince chooses to be feared than loved and why the prince may not keep their word are among those topics which Machiavelli has emphasized. Besides, in his implicit or explicit political advices, Machiavelli strongly recommends the ruler to pretend rather than being a good man in his political life. This is because of the fact that being a good man for a ruler in his public life may reverse his end, his power, so that he should not be dictated by his private religious and moral norms, rather he need to act as per the reason of the state.

Beyond disclosing the realities of political life and providing those underlined advices to political leaders, Machiavelli did not degrade moral norms, but drew a boundary between religion or morality and that of politics. Besides, there is a predominant argument on his work that he is concerned both with the means and the ends calculated by political leaders beyond ordinary moral consideration. According to the proponents of this position, Machiavelli advocates strategies to pursue for power to realize strong and secured state. When Machiavelli justifies force, violence and cruelty as lesser evils, it is not from the fact that he is crazy about mere political power rather he is thinking of the way for the good of the whole community. In this regard, he is usually claimed to develop a teleological political discourse rather than an enemy of morality. However, the majority of the literature, which I strongly agree with, shows contrary to such a teleological interpretation of Machiavelli's work. Accordingly, instead of valuing for the interest or security of the state as well as the community, Machiavelli's work is more focused to maintain political power as an end in itself which cannot be motivated by the above extra-political ends. In this regard, Machiavelli does not rule out the possibility that protecting the interest as well as the security of the community as well the state may be among those viable options to consolidate the power of the ruler.

Yes Machiavelli's political reflection on power and morality shows the real nature of political life at the international as well as domestic levels. In the international context, we can witness the foreign policy alternatives and strategies of dominant actors to maintain their global supremacy. In the domestic context, there are also a number of political leaderships which are exploiting the basic orientations of Machiavelli to maintain their power. Therefore, Machiavelli is a political realist who opens a new chapter in political leadership by disclosing a revolutionary approach on our conventional understanding of the real nature of political life.

Based on the above analysis and conclusion, one can recommend that Machiavelli shall not be criticized as if he were the enemy of morality and religion. Thus I argue that he shall be understood as a pioneer of political realism who emancipated the medieval periods' dogmatic bondage and analysis of political power in favor of secular and amoral discourse about it. Besides, Machiavelli shall not be interpreted as an enemy of democracy and responsible political leadership since he argues for strong state with strong political leadership which can maintain the security of the state as well as its citizens. In this regard, Machiavelli was a firm believer in republicanism. This fact is reflected in his personal life and literary works, including the Discourses. No republic, however, could ever come to existence and survive in a tumultuous environment according to him. Therefore, according to him, the first step for its creation was, in his view, transforming social disorder into social order using force and deceit if necessary.

However, I argued that Machiavelli's descriptive and realistic analysis of human nature, politics, power and national interest would never escape essential methodological questions. In other words, his descriptive approach in dealing with the above controversial, value laden, and normative social science discourses is difficult to be achieved. Thus, in dealing with politics as well as its variables in general, we need to go beyond Machiavelli's descriptive (empirical), Copernican and quantitative approaches and analysis. This is fundamentally because of the ontological problem or question that he is dealing with (what is real i.e. power) as well as the epistemological question that he faces (how can we deal with it) are inherently related to subjective, historical, moral and cultural values which shall also be dealt with some qualitative, relative and normative discourses unlike Machiavelli.

In addition to the above critics, Machiavelli shall also respond the question how a state power which is established as per the total and absolute consent of its people, in the context of Emanuel Kant and John Lock, could be sustainable if there is mutual distrust between those who are in power and that of ordinary citizens. Thus, domestically, in a democracy through which citizens are autonomous and ultimate owners of their political leadership,

Machiavellian amoral analysis of power may not be a practically cogent option.

Finally, Machiavelli's analysis of the international politics predominantly lies on his underlining assumption that state is the only actor in the international system. This implies that the prime objective of foreign policy of a state is purely meant to maintain its sole national interest. And this is achieved through all possible means emanated from states' own might, not from unreliable external diplomatic and institutional frame works according to his analysis. However, the present trends of international relations show partially contrary to what Machiavelli describes. Unlike his radical analysis of political realism as the governing rule of global politics the followings are realities in the international politics: the emergence of dominant international actors other than states, the growing trend for interdependence among those institutions including states for their reciprocal interests, and the development of international diplomacy as well as institutions to protect national interests of states in light of mutual trust as well as respect among themselves than mutual destruction. Thus, though the predominant practice of the existing international system lies on maintaining global hegemony which is highly Machiavellian in its nature, the other alternative which is founded on political idealism is also gaining momentum since it lies on mutual global interdependence among different actors, global diplomacy and institutional frameworks as foundations as well as viable options to tackle a zero sum game international politics.

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